(b) The University of Delhi has conducted studies in Kullu Valley on land use patterns and not on blanket of smog or on the recession of Himalayan Glaciers, sea level rise and erosion of low lying areas. However, according to the Geological survey of India, as per the inventory of Himalayan Glaciers, the Indian part of Himalaya has more than 7500 glaciers of all dimensions. There are only 365 major glaciers more than 5 km in length (excluding Shyok and Kishanganga basins). The studies conducted by the Survey reveal that the majority of them are receding. The rate of recession in different climate zones of Himalaya is found to be variable in different years. Therefore, the studies confine to Kullu Valley may not give the overall natural cyclic process. The earth has witnessed several phases of glacial and interglacial period. It is a natural phenomenon. Presently the earth is passing through an interglacial phase whereby the ice bodies throughout the world are receding and the recession of glacier is a natural phenomenon and could also be attributed to global warming.

(c) Regarding smog, it may be mentioned that the existing legal and policy framework supported by several initiatives to protect and improve the environment, addresses the concerns of air pollution in India. Regarding recession of the Himalayan Glaciers, the Government is aware of the environmental concerns and has supported conservation activities in the Himalayan region including afforestation, establishment of community toilets, and removal of garbage and promotion of eco-tourism.

Discussion on Farm Subsidies at Earth Summit

2397. SHRI YADLAPATI VENKAT RAO: Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state:

(a) whether India demanded in the recent Earth Summit at Johannesburg, that the developed countries should lift farm subsidies; and

(b) if so, the reaction of the developed countries thereto?

THE MINISTER OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI T.R. BAALU): (a) and (b) During the discussion on agriculture in the World Summit on Sustainable Development held in Johannesburg, issues related to the impact of trade policies that support micro enterprises, value added agricultural products and re-direction of agricultural subsidies to poverty

and hunger eradication were discussed. Bracketed text on achieving improvements in market access, phasing out of export subsidies and reduction of trade distorting practices in agriculture were considered together with other trade related issues. However, due to their domestic compulsions, developed countries did not agree to lift farm subsidies and thus it did not find place in the agreed texts of Political Declaration and Johannesburg Plan of Implementation.

Law for use of Forest Materials

2398. SHRI RAMACHANDRA KHUNTIA: Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Ministry of Environment and Forests had received proposal during June, 2001 from Orissa Ex-MLAs Council, to make Law for not using the forest materials in buildings, except thatched houses and instead of using iron, aluminium, plastics as alternatives; and

(b) if so, what steps have been taken so far, by Government in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI T.R. BAALU): (a) and (b) Yes, Sir. The Ministry is already aware of the issue of desirability of substitution of wood by other materials for various purposes including construction of buildings and has issued guidelines/instructions to the States/Central Government Organisations for necessary action.

Pine Forests in Central Himalayan region

†2399. SHRI HARISH RAWAT: Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that underground water level of Central Himalayan region is continuously declining, due to expansion of Pine forest there;

(b) whether it is also a fact that during the recent years, the area covered by wide leaf trees has shrunk while the pine forest cover has expanded; and

(c) if so, the steps his Ministry is going to take to promote afforestation

†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.